

Reformulating the concept of “substance” in metaphysics

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Introduction

Some philosophers seem to want to do away with the idea of *substance*, that is so pervasive in ancient metaphysics, like Platonism. It is true that modern physics has done away with the notion of fixed, static substances, as can be seen in quantum mechanics.

This dilemma of how to preserve some notion of *substance* can be easily solved however.

Energy and matter are interchangeable

When one understands that people in ancient times had no sharp idea of the evolution of spirit and matter (as even few have today), then one can also understand that one can easily reframe the **concept** of substance: think of light, matter and energy in their various forms.

We now know that matter can be converted into energy, and vice versa.

The whole matter has become more fluid, so to speak.

One can speak of force fields that embody energy and are causative of formations of quantum particles (with a wave aspect).

As I have described in my article on Vitvan¹, one can talk about *configurations of units of energy*. For example, a proton is such a configuration, as is an atom, a cell, and so on.

So, substance can be thought of as being a kind of energy/forcefield, that gives rise to units of energy (quanta) that can form part of our world, body, etc., for some time, coalesce, bind together, manifest, and dissolve back into that field, of which there are many, according to the esoteric tradition².

1 <https://archive.org/details/the-practical-gnostic-teachings-of-ralph-m-de-bit-vitvan>

2 The work of writers such as Vitvan and De Purucker cannot be overestimated in this regard.

The ancient four Elements: Fire, Air, Water, Earth

The same idea can apply to the ancient notions of the four Elements: Fire, Air, Water, Earth. From an esoteric point of view, these Elements do not refer so much to the physical elements of those names, as to subtle fields that consist of, or are composed of, or give form to, various elemental beings with a spiritual, mental, emotional, or semi-physical quality. These beings pervade the human being, as can be witnessed or intuited by close observation. Our *thought life* is a fine example of that, as described in chapter two of my book “Rediscovering Transcendence”. One can learn to observe the ebb and flow of thoughts in one's mind. Exercises are given in said book.

Today, there is a growing awareness of the existence of such fields (and matrix forms) as can be witnessed by viewing a diversity of podcasts on the internet. Carl Gustav Jung spoke about the “collective unconscious”, which seems to be such a field that connects all human beings.

The fact that most of these fields lie outside of the measurement capabilities of our current apparatuses, does not mean that these fields and subtle elements don't exist. It simply is a **limitation** of said equipment, including the outer five human senses. Only a fanatic follower of scientific materialism (of which there are many) would deny this obvious fact. The so-called Enlightenment has not produced spiritual enlightenment, but techno-feudalism and a dumbing down of the population. But this as an aside.

In Buddhism one can find mention of the luminous light³, which also point to the fact that there are subtle forms of substances (light) that can work through the human mind.

3 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luminous_mind

Connecting process philosophy and substance philosophy

The conclusion of this short note is, that process philosophy and substance philosophy can be integrated into a more comprehensive philosophy: a more integral type of philosophy. Process and structure come together in a dynamic way. Structures can be seen as evolving through time, by evolutionary processes of a type as indicated in esoteric literature.⁴

Substances acquire a *dynamic* nature in modern metaphysics⁵.

Slowly, the fundamental nature and role of consciousness emerges into the minds and accounts of modern philosophers.

4 Indeed, the [“Fundamentals of the esoteric philosophy”](#) and later works, by [G. de Purucker](#), contain much of this nature.

5 See Vitvan's writings at [sno.org](#) and footnote 1.